

Minutes
Town of Acton Community Preservation Committee
January 07, 2016
Acton Memorial Library

Members Present: Peter Ashton (Chair), Peter Berry, Tory Beyer, Walter Foster, Ken Sghia-Hughes, Joe Will (Clerk)

Others Present: Kristen Guichard (Acton Assistant Planner), Robert Hummel (Acton Assistant Planner), Roland Bourdon (Finance Committee observer), Cathy Fochtman (Acton Recreation Director), Tom Tidman (Acton Director of Natural Resources), Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources Department), Fran Portante (Acton Natural Resources Department), Kevin Lehner (Boxborough Recreation Department), Mike Gowing (NARA Master Plan Committee), Andy Richardt (Chairman, Miracle League of Massachusetts Board of Directors)

Peter A opened the meeting at 7:38 P.M.

I. Citizen Concerns

- None.

II. Minutes of December 17, 2015

- It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to approve the minutes as presented.

III. Project Hearings

- Recreation Department (RD) Miracle Field Comfort Station, T.J. O'Grady Skatepark Expansion Phase 2, NARA Parking Control

Prior to presenting the RD projects, Cathy shared the following:

The RD is self-funding, operating on a 53D (Chapter 44) revolving account. It takes in fees and donations and can retain up to \$10K in profit. The RD is always looking for new ways to generate revenue and it would like to be able to retain its earnings, but what is left above the \$10K goes to the Town General Fund. The RD does try, when possible, to use its funds as seed money. At this point, the CPA is the only funding source that the RD has for capital projects. The RD presents a couple capital projects for Town funding each year. The last funded, Goward Playground and also expanded parking at NARA, were in 2012. In general, it is difficult for the RD to compete against other town capital projects.

This year, the RD initially submitted five projects to the CPC but is withdrawing two of them. Before beginning a playground renovation at Jones Field, the RD wants to step back and review the total use of Jones Field, as the baseball field has not been used for baseball in two years. The Acton Family Network will help the RD when its time to move with this project. Also, the RD is withdrawing the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Comfort Station project for various reasons.

Cathy presented the RD projects in the order of priority voted by the Recreation Commission at its meeting on Tuesday of this week. Her PowerPoint (PP) visuals may be found at: <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-7171>

Cathy began the PP presentation with an update of the RD CPA projects for which \$ remain unspent. See the PP slide "Recap of CPA Projects in Progress." She indicated that

- construction of the Skatepark bowl will be deferred until after the Spring soccer season, likely in mid-June.
- the Elm Street playground is waiting only for some picnic tables.
- the RD has been working closely with the Office of Michael Rosenfeld (OMR) this past year, much related to the new modular opportunity that presents itself in the first project mentioned below.
- the RD is after Historic District Commission (HDC) approval of the refurbishment of the basketball courts at Gardner and Goward playgrounds.
- the NARA improvements (security and shade structures) will be done by this Spring.

Cathy then gave an overview of the NARA 10-Year Master Plan that the Department of Natural Resources has under development. See the two PP slides, “Long Range NARA Plan.”

She then provided information on this year’s three projects that request a total of \$565K. She followed the priority given the projects by the Recreation Commission.

– The request for the Miracle Field Comfort Station (#1 priority by the Rec Comm) is \$400K that would be leveraged with funds and services from other sources to meet the \$652K overall cost. The RD and the Miracle League will continue to pursue additional aid. Andy gave a brief history of the Miracle Field, stating that the next phase has always been to get a comfort station built. He described what other funds and services have become available, and some of the ongoing efforts to get additional help. He and Cathy used the PP slides to explain the structure and projected use of the building. They pointed out that in addition to serving Miracle Field athletes, the comfort station would serve other NARA patrons. In particular, the comfort station could possibly be a new base for the NARA camp (currently at the bathhouse) with a benefit that the campers would not have to share space with Rail Trail users. The comfort station also would provide improved shelter from storms.

Questions/observations:

There is a revenue stream aspect of this (the concession stand) that’s not incorporated into the request.

Is septic capacity adequate? Yes.

The building would have a Men’s Room, a Women’s Room, and a Family Room. In the design, thought should be given to increasing the user capacities of these.

What’s the time frame for building this if it is funded this Spring? We would move right away on it. We’d be looking to pour foundations right away and get the modular units in place asap. The buildings would be on slabs, no basements.

One idea is to look at a “community build” as soon as Jay Redmond (current modular building owner) says the buildings are available. The BoS will be voting on whether to accept two of the buildings this Saturday. It may be that Jay would want the buildings off his property very quickly. A discussion ensued speculating on how this could work.

Is there a way of phasing in this project in order to decrease this year’s requested amount (e.g., do the exterior completely, and then phase the interior construction)? We are asking OMR about this and OMR will look at it. However, spreading out the project over time would cost more in the long run.

Another option would be bonding, but this would limit available CPA \$ in subsequent years. If this were to be bonded, could the debt service be handled each year by a combination of CPA and RD funds? Perhaps, some portion of proceeds from the concession stand could be used.

Where does “home for NARA camp” come from? It would be a drop-off/pickup place for campers, and also a gathering place for meals and meetings. This is done now at the bathhouse. The bathhouse will become a much greater public-use area.

The pre-modular cost of a comfort station was about 30% greater than the cost using two donated modulars.

What happens if we don’t get the modulars? Cathy: We would fall back to the original estimate and numbers.

Andy: The Miracle League is really committed to getting this done, even if this funding bid is not approved.

Mike: We hope that the need (per this proposal) will be less than \$400K. It will not go the other way.

– The request for the TJ O’Grady Skatepark expansion (#2 priority by the Rec Comm) is \$135K that would be leveraged by a \$40K project award from the Boxborough CPA to meet the \$175K overall cost.

Questions/observations:

The designers of the recently-opened Lynch Family (nee Charles River) Skatepark in Boston are the designers of the TJ O’Grady Skatepark expansion.

Kevin: The Boxborough CPC put this at the “top of our list due quite frankly to the failure of the town with such a project 10 years ago . . . We’re ready for Boxborough Town Meeting with this. We are prepared for the argument about funding a project in another town.”

What if the skatepark gets funded by Boxborough and not by Acton? Cathy: We’d find that very difficult. The Boxborough contribution encourages the CPC to look hard at a way to fund it.

This is indeed the last phase. The skatepark bowl was funded in 2012 and it’s not gotten going too fast. The bowl would go in this summer and we would have to work out with the Friends of the Lower Fields a schedule for the Skate Plaza. Could we wait on funding the plaza? Putting out the bowl by itself makes it a “specialty project.” Pressed on whether the plaza would be built this summer, Cathy asserted strongly that she “will push to get this (plaza) built this summer.”

Peter A: One reason why the plaza was not funded last year was because we were waiting to hear from Boxborough.

Last year the request was for \$160K. This year, \$15K has been added for landscaping.

– The request for NARA Parking Control (#3 priority by the Rec Comm), is \$30K to design (not yet implement) a parking control system, thereby lowering an initial project request from \$150K. Issues are covered in the PP slides. This would introduce a new cash flow in NARA operations.

IV. Report – CPA Study Committee (SC)

- The SC has not met since the last CPC meeting. It is meeting next Monday evening.
- Peter B has yet to send to the CPC Stuart Saginor's PP presentation to the SC.

V. Project Reports and Updates

- None

VI. Administrative updates

- Kristen reported that the CPC can recapture \$1670 from the NARA Pavilion funding. It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to recapture these funds.
- On Monday of this week, Peter B spoke with the Board of Selectmen (BoS) about ranking Town projects. This will happen on 01/25 (after the 01/21 CPC meeting). Peter B and the rest of the CPC felt that the BoS should not include in their rankings the Acton Community Housing Corporation (ACHC) project and the Administration fees that the Town assesses. One reason for not including the ACHC project: The ACHC does not go through the BoS. In general, it seems good that the BoS waited to do its rankings as the project listing has changed. Also, the BoS now will have the benefit of knowing the ranking by the Recreation Commission of the Recreation Department's three projects.
- The CPC never received a Trail Through Time Proposal, as Linda McElroy had indicated would be the case (i.e., nothing this year) when she and Doug Halley appeared before the CPC a few meetings ago.
- The HDC recently sent an email inquiring about the status of its project proposal that it had submitted well in advance of the submission deadline. It apparently went to the BoS but never made it to the CPC. The CPC is fine with accepting the application. Walter volunteered to be the project liaison with the HDC. He will get in touch with the HDC about its project appearing first on the 01/21 CPC agenda. In the meantime, the CPC will get Legal Counsel review as to whether this project meets the CPA historical requirements. The HDC project proposal may be found at:
<http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/Get/Document-51154>
(Note: Ken is not commenting on this project due to conflict of interest concerns.)
- Following the HDC presentation on 01/21, the CPC will start deliberations without the benefit of the BoS rankings.
- The CPC would like to have the project spreadsheet updated. According to Peter A, the CPC now has requests for about \$1.4M with about \$1.1M available.

At 9:24 P.M., it was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to adjourn.

Next Scheduled Meeting:

01/21 HDC Project presentation/Project Deliberations